



**An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide**
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

SFI Public Service Fellowship 2023

1. Name of Governmental Department or Agency
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
2. Title of the Project
DECCA The impact of and interactions between upcoming EU legislative changes and existing national commitments in relation to the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector
3. Description of the Project
<p>Ireland's current commitments for measures and actions to reduce emissions in the LULUCF sector are set out in the Climate Action Plan 2023. However, future commitments will need to be aligned with a number of EU legislative proposals either recently adopted or currently being progressed.</p> <p>As part of the EU Fit for 55 package, the existing EU LULUCF Regulation which governs emissions and removals in the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Sector has been revised. This sets increased EU wide targets for carbon removals to be achieved by 2030 with national binding targets for individual Member States. The overall EU-level objective is 310 MtCO₂eq of net removals in the LULUCF sector in 2030, under which Ireland will have a new target to reduce net land-use emissions to 3.7 MtCO₂eq by 2030. The revised regulation was formally adopted by the Council in March 2023. Significantly for Ireland, recognition of the legacy impacts our high proportion of organics has been incorporated into the agreed and adopted Regulation. However, there are significant implications for Ireland in terms of the emissions reductions required by the regulation, and the impact of requirements for higher levels of accuracy with regards to monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>The proposed EU Nature Restoration Law seeks to repair European habitats that are in poor condition and bring back nature to all ecosystems. The aim is for nature restoration measures to apply to a proportion of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 and to eventually extend these measures to all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Article 9(4) targets the restoration of organic soils in agricultural use that constitute drained peatlands, with separate targets specified for both the restoration and rewetting of these lands for 2030, 2040 and 2050, expressed as a percentage total of all such lands. However, provision is also made to allow for the restoration and rewetting of lands other than drained agricultural peatlands to count towards these targets, namely peatlands that have been used for peat extraction and drained peatlands under other land uses such as forestry. There is no limit on the area of restored or rewetted peat extraction sites that can contribute to these targets and maximum limits of 20 or 30% have been proposed for the contribution of drained peatlands under other land uses such as forestry to meeting these targets.</p>

Nationally, we have already committed to a number of targets set out in the Climate Action Plan 2023 that will support the proposed requirements of Article 9(4) out to 2030 (and beyond - as our national targets exceed the proposed requirements of the Nature Restoration Law out to 2030). These include the rehabilitation of approximately 36,000 ha of peatlands under current schemes such as the Bord na Móna Enhanced Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme and the LIFE People and Peatlands programmes and a commitment to identify and rehabilitate approximately 42,000 further hectares of peatlands. Significant progress has been achieved in rewetting peatlands that were previously used for peat extraction, with over 11,000 hectares of peatlands rehabilitated to date under the Bord na Móna scheme. There are a number of other peatland rehabilitation projects in progress at a smaller scale.

The Climate Action Plan 2023 also commits to reducing the management intensity (i.e. water table management) of 80,000 ha of drained organic soils by 2030. However, work in this area is largely only commencing, with support for approximately 2,500 ha of reduced management intensity applied for via the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) this year and work being done to rewet agricultural peatlands through projects under the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Rewetting of Farmed Peatland Pilot Project. Some further reduced management intensity work is also being undertaken on organic soils under the EIP Pearl Mussel Project, the Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme (SUAS) and the LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature project.

Additionally, there are further proposals from the EU for a new Soil Health Law to significantly improve the state of soils, and protect soils on the same legal basis as air and water. Furthermore, the EU recently proposed a new regulation to develop a regulatory framework for certifying carbon removals, which aims to offer incentives to farmers to upscale carbon farming within the EU. It is to be adopted by Member States on a voluntary basis and is viewed as a key enabling mechanism to meet the targets set out by the revised LULUCF Regulation.

This project will explore the impact of and the interactions between these upcoming EU legislative changes and existing national commitments in relation to the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector.

4. Project Scope

The upcoming EU legislative changes are currently in development and as such the project scope will require refinement at project commencement stage in line with the legislative developments and updates to the Climate Action Plan that will take place between now and Q1 2024.

The above legislation is broad ranging. However, the focus of this work will be specifically in relation to GHG emissions/removals aspects of the legislation for the LULUCF sector. Consideration will be given to applications proposing to address the entirety of the above (i.e. the interaction with and impact of the revised LULUCF regulation, the Nature Restoration Law, the Soil Health Law, the Carbon Removal Certification Framework and national commitments set out under the Climate Action Plan with respect to the LULUCF sector) or a subset of the above.

In undertaking this work, it will also be necessary to be cognizant of parallel developments in relation to setting a national sectoral emissions ceiling for the LULUCF sector (due Q4 2023), Phase 2 of the Land Use Review (interim reporting due Q4 2023, final report due Q1 2025), and annual revisions to the Climate Action Plan (Q4 2023, Q4 2024).

<p>A substantive part of the work will require expert analysis of the relevant parts of each of the legislative proposals, will synthesise the requirements of each and their respective interactions, and undertake horizon scanning for further relevant developments over the lifetime of the project to help inform policy making on land use.</p>
<p>5. Skills/Expertise Required</p>
<p>Desired but not all essential depending on the final project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the LULUCF sector • Knowledge of GHG reporting • Knowledge of relevant EU legislation • Understanding of agricultural, forestry & landowner practices in Ireland • Understanding of biodiversity, climate, water and socioeconomic issues around land use • Verbal, graphic and written communication skills and an ability to distil scientific information in a format suitable for supporting policymaking.
<p>6. Expected Outputs of Project</p>
<p>Project scope and outputs will require further development in line with EU legislative and national policy developments. Consideration will be given to applications proposing to address all or a subset of topics as highlighted above, depending on skills identified.</p> <p>Broadly, the expected outputs of the project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of critical analysis • Short turn around analysis of policy options • Delivery of knowledge transfer
<p>7. Working Arrangements</p>
<p>Hybrid/Blended working arrangements, i.e. remote and on site (hot desking) with possible occasional off site meetings within Ireland. Location: Haddington Rd, Dublin 4</p>
<p>8. Expected Timeline</p>
<p>24 months part-time envisaged as most appropriate, but flexible depending on final proposal.</p>
<p>9. Contact Details</p>
<p>Dr. Niamh Gibbons</p>